Dancing Body Beautiful: Educational Resource Connecting

Dance with Sculpture

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Big Idea: We can use several strategies to deepen understanding and enjoyment of works of art whether the art form is static, as in statuary, or kinesthetic, as in ballet.

Background: The following activities are designed for teachers to include in their curriculum *before* or *after* a visit to the Portland Art Museum or a dance performance. The word "leader" is used interchangeably with "teacher." The activities ask students to try some basic movement concepts from dance training while they consider, imagine and "get inside" several pieces of sculpture from the special exhibition *The Body Beautiful in Ancient Greece*. The suggested activities provide learning strategies that integrate mind and body and can be transferred to explore other works of art from the museum's permanent collection.

Outcomes: Students will be asked to create shapes and movements with their bodies, individually and in groups, based on their observations, understandings and imaginings about the art.

Materials: This work can be done in the classroom with slides of the art or after viewing the art in the gallery, the latter requiring that students take a "mental picture" of the art in order to create shapes in another environment outside the gallery. Some of this work can be done in the gallery under the direction of docents.

- A distinct sound making device, like a drum, bell or two rhythm sticks, will assist the leader in cueing the beginning and endpoint of activities.
- Two small pieces of marble tapped together, or a small hammer striking a piece of bronze or marble, might work well to invoke the sculptors studio.

Activities – Each activity includes: title, how long the activity might take in parenthesis, where the activity could occur in brackets, key vocabulary in bold italics, a list of directions, and possible prompts to enhance learning.

Activity 1: The Three D Warm Up

Exploring different *planes,* or levels.

(2-5 minutes) [In the classroom or in a space at the museum.]

Opener: To start the process, leader asks students, "What does 3-D mean?" guiding students to think about and discuss *three-dimensionality* in space. We live in 3-D! Geometry describes it as length, width and height.

Sculpture, viewed from all sides, reveals a frozen three dimensional moment. Dancers moving through space explore a full range of dimensions. In this warm up students are asked to think about and then move their bodies, practicing repetition and variation, and just getting the blood flowing. The leader may choose a student volunteer to call out the warm-up directions.

Instructions: Begin in *neutral* position which means to stand tall and very still, with stomachs drawn in toward the spine, soft shoulders, easy arms hanging down and legs straight, but not locked, head situated on top of the spine like a bowling ball balancing on the tip of a cone. Students can be directed to take a neutral stance whenever they hear the tap sound.

- Jump in place 3 times,
- Stop and stand in neutral,
- o Stretch your arms out in 3 different directions, one after the other,
- Stop and stand in neutral,
- o Bend your knees 3 different ways,
- Stop and stand in neutral,
- Put your body in 3 different levels-high, low, middle,
- o Make your body three different sizes—tiny, giant, average,
- o Jump your feet into three different placements on the floor,
- Stop and stand in neutral,
- Take 3 breaths, each breath getting deeper, longer, and calmer.

Further thinking: Why do dancers warm up their bodies before they begin training or performing? How do artists warm up?

Activity 2: Where Is My Weight?

Exploring center of gravity and balance



(2 minutes) [Anywhere]

This activity brings attention to a body's center of gravity and how it feels to be in balance.

Opener: Stand in neutral and really think about your weight being equally balanced between both feet. One foot should feel the same amount of connection to the floor. Sway a bit to find your own "sweet spot" of stability (See *Cycladic Figurine*, Marble, Greek, 2600-

2400 BCE, British Museum)

Instructions: Shift the weight ever so slightly over to the right foot but still thinking about the left foot staying connected to the floor and without changing any part of the rest of the body. Come back to Neutral and then shift weight to the left. How far can you go without falling out of balance? What adjustment in your body do you need to make to not fall over? Come back to Neutral and try shifting your weight to the ball of your feet: raising up on

shifting your weight to the ball of your feet; raising up on "tiptoe" and balance.



Further thinking: How do you think the *Cycladic Figurine* is positioned, or balanced in space? Where is its center of gravity? What about *Markos Doloroso* by Manuel Neri?

Activity 3: Curves Upon Curves

Exploring balance in *contrapposto* (An Italian term meaning counter pose. In the visual arts it describes a pose where the weight is mostly on one foot so that the shoulders and arms twist off-axis from the hips and legs appearing relaxed.)

(2 minutes) [Any space where students have room around them when they stand]



Opener: Observe the standing sculptures. Tapping signals when time is up.

Instructions: Begin standing in neutral—consider the Zeus, for example (*Polykleitan Zeus*, Bronze, Roman 1st century CE British Museum). Shift hips to the right side causing more

weight to be on the straight right leg. Keeping the shoulders where they were (they might twist), release the left heel from the floor and bending the left knee slightly. Add the arms. This is a pose that is called

contrapposto. Maybe this shape is like standing in line for a movie in a relaxed way. It has a certain rhythm or pattern of body adjustments to it. As one part of your body weight (hips) shifts to the right side, a corresponding area of weight (head/shoulders) shifts over toward the left, maintaining balance by stacking curves atop curves like an "s" in several spatial planes.



Look at the *Spanish Servant Girl* by Jaques Lipchitz. Make the shape of this figure's stance. How is it similar or different to the *Polykleitan Zeus*?



Further thinking: Make the shape of *Terracotta Dancer* (Terracotta Female Figurine, Italy, 2nd Century BCE, British Museum). Is it harder because she is draped? Or, create a new shape with the body that is built from several curved (or bent) parts of the body, remembering that it must be steady and feel on balance. Try to move into the shape of *Torse de*

Choree (Jean (Hans) Arp, 1961 Portland Art Museum). What are the similarities? Differences? Try switching back and forth between the different shapes.



Activity 4: Call to Arms!

Exploration in sculpting

(5-8 min) [Best done in an open space. If that is not possible then it should be done only by a few student pairs at a time as demonstration for the rest of the class. In schools, the hallway can sometimes be used if no other room is available.]



Before you Begin: This activity asks students to observe a work of sculpture (*Bathing Beauty*, Bronze Aphrodite Figurine, Greek 200-100 BCE, British Museum) and then work together in pairs to replicate the sculpture, imagining how the original artist created the arms that are now lost to time, and then adding in the missing arms. Students should be encouraged to stretch their imaginations when wondering about what those arms were doing.

Students also practice speaking, listening and following clear verbal directions. The leader might ask open ended questions about sculpture and how we can sense balance (for instance, the rhythmic repetition of shaping in the art). Afterward the leader may tell the students what this sculpture is thought to be doing.

Opener: Students observe the sculpture for 30 seconds. Tapping signals that time is up.

Instructions: Marble and Sculptor

In pairs students decide who will be Marble and who will be Sculptor (they will both get a turn at doing both parts). Leader gives directions below and tells the students that at the sound of the taps they will work together to make their sculpture. They will have 1-2 minutes to create their body sculptures. Tapping sound will cue them to stop.

1. Marble stands in neutral

2. Sculptor gives polite, low volume, (almost a whisper) verbal directions to Marble to create interesting arm designs. Such as: Please raise your right arm to the side...bend that elbow reaching it to the back... point first finger downward. Please put your left hand on your hip.

3. Marble then completes the sculpture by recreating the rest of the woman's body position with legs and torso while holding the just-created arm position.

4. Trade so that each student creates and knows their pose.5. Share the Art! After everyone knows their shape, have half the class present their pose, holding it for 5 taps. Leader should wait until all poses are still to start the time. Applause is great afterward!

6. Trade and repeat. Or, if space allows, ask students to walk around each other in the space as if walking in a museum. When they hear the tap sound they stop and make their pose, like a sculpture. When they hear the tap again, they resume walking. You could pretend that the



sculptures come to life and are walking around... they freeze their pose when someone enters the gallery, and resume their walking when the coast is clear!

7. Try a similar process with the sculpture *Marionette* by Richard Stankiewicz. Instead of marble and sculptor, students are the marionette and puppeteer. Marionettes have stings that move the puppet. Imagine each joint has a string on it. The puppeteer pulls the invisible string to move the marionette. How would Stankiewicz's marionette move?

Further thinking: Ask students open ended questions about the experience. What did it feel like to be the Marble or the Sculptor? Did you like one role better than the other? Was it hard to balance? Were you trying to tell a story by doing a certain action? Would it be easier or harder to make the legs and torso shape first and then have the Sculptor add the arms last?

Making connections: The equivalent word for the "Sculptor" in dance is "choreographer," which is a person that makes up dances. What would the equivalent word for the "Marble" role be in the art of dance?



Activity 5: Two Games of Knucklebones

In this activity students observe two sculptures that possess a common narrative thread—playing a game of knucklebones. [Info about the game and pictures of the playing pieces can be found here: <u>http://archaeologicalmuseum.jhu.edu/the-</u> <u>collection/object-stories/archaeology-of-daily-</u> life/childhood/knucklebones/

Part 1: What happens next?

Opener: Leader asks students to observe the sculpture of two girls playing knucklebones (*A Game*, Terracotta Group (women playing knucklebones), Greek 330-300 BCE, British Museum).

Instructions: Ask students to choose one of the girls and recreate the pose in their own body. Students could be divided in pairs as well.

- 1. Imagine and make-up the very next action that the girl might do and freeze still in that new shape.
- 2. Only one change, although it can include many parts of the body all at once. Will she just move her arm to throw the knucklebone? Stand up? Put her head on her knee? The ideas are infinite—be creative!
- 3. Share the art! After deciding what the next action pose is, divide the group so that half the group can see what the other half created and trade.

Further thinking: Why did you choose that next movement?

Part 2: Lost Boy



Opener: Leader asks students to observe the sculpture of a boy fighting with another person, easy to see as he bites his opponent. The other person, probably a boy, is missing-except for one arm. **Instructions:** Students will make the sculpture with their own bodies, imagining and filling in the shape of the missing player.

 In pairs, students will take turns being The Fighter and The Lost Boy (*Against the Rules*, Marble, Two boys falling out (after a game of knucklebones), Roman, 1st Century CE, British Museum). Both boys and girls can play the parts.
The Fighter carefully makes the pose of the boy in the sculpture, being as exact as possible.
The Lost Boy inserts his arm into position and creates a pose as if part of the fight. Hold the pose for 5 taps.



4. Trade roles.

5. Try to create the modern sculpture *La chambre à coucher de l'empereur* ((The Emperor's Bedchamber), Reuben Nakian, 1954, cast 1958, Portland Art Museum) in the same way. One student creates half of the sculpture while the other student creates the rest of it (or even 3 students create the shape).Students will need to decide how to divide the sculpture. Then explore how this sculpture might move through space. Some helpful things to consider are:

- How many points of contact are there with the ground?
- Identify connecting parts.
- -Where are the natural divisions for each student's body.

6. Share the Art! Take turns presenting to the class, or ask for volunteers to perform the Lost Boy or *La chambre à coucher de l'empereur*-inspired sculpture.



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